

Message Text

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E. O.11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: DE LEON ELECTED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DCG) CANDIDATE
AT DISPUTED CONVENTION

REF: GUATEMALA 1800

SUMMARY: MAY 20 CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION NOMINATED
PARTY LEADER RENE DE LEON SCHLOTTER AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL
PRE- CANDIDATE AS DCG DISSIDENT SUPPORTERS OF GUATEMALA CITY
MAYOR MANUEL COLOM ARGUETA CRIED FRAUD OVER LAST MINUTE
CHANGE IN CONVENTION SITE WHICH LOCKED COLOM OUT OF EVENT.
ELECTORAL REGISTRY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY RECOGNIZE DE LEON' S
VICTORY SINCE GOG ELECTORAL STRATEGY CALLS FOR OBSTRUCTING
PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS OF COLOM WHOM IT REGARDS AS ITS
MOST DANGEROUS OPPONENT. LATTER NONETHELESS EMERGED FROM
DAY LOOKING GOOD, DEMONSTRATING CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT
WITHIN DCG AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ON DE LEON ON DCG LEADER' S OWN
TURF. COLOM' S LONG- TERM PROSPECTS FOR PRESIDENTIAL
NOMINATION , HOWEVER, CONTINUE DIM. DE LEON, FOR HIS PART, WON
PYRRHIC VICTORY BY AVOIDING SHOWDOWN WITH COLOM DESPITE
CONVENTION
RIGGED IN HIS FAVOR AND NOW FACES SERIOUSLY DIVIDED DCG. GOVERN-
MENT, IN LAST ANALYSIS, CAME CLOSER TO ACHIEVING
ITS FULL OBJECTIVES AT CONVENTION THAN DID EITHER DE LEON
OR COLOM. END SUMMARY.

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1. DCG FOUNDER AND PARTY LEADER RENE DE LEON SCHLOTTER HAD LONG PREPARED FOR AN UNCHALLENGED NOMINATION AT DCG PRESIDENTIAL PRE- CANDIDATE NOMINATING CONVENTION. HOWEVER, DCG DISSIDENTS' PROPOSAL IN APRIL TO NOMINATE POPULAR GUATEMALA CITY MAYOR MANUEL COLOM ARGUETA INDICATED THAT DE LEON AND COLOM WOULD HAVE CONFRONTATION, A FACT CONFIRMED BY INTENSE PROPAGANDA EFFORT BY BOTH FACTIONS DURING WEEK BEFORE CONVENTION.

2. THEATRICALS OF CONVENTION ITSELF WERE REMINISCENT OF LAST APRIL'S PRE CONVENTION (REFTEL). COLOM'S WELL ORGANIZED FOLLOWERS BEGAN ARRIVING AT INDUSTRIAL PARK CONVENTION SITE AT 5 A. M. ON MAY 20 AND BY 8 A. M. WERE ON HAND IN LARGE NUMBERS TO MEET DCG SECRETARY GENERAL AND DE LEON'S RIGHT- HAND MAN DANILO BARILLAS, WHO, AFTER SURVEYING SITUATION LEFT FOR SEMI- SECRET, ALTERNATE CONVENTION SITE AT ZONE 13 BUS COMPANY GARAGE WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN RENTED FOR CONTINGENCY. (BARILLAS LATER CHARGED HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ENTER INDUSTRIAL PARK MEETING HALL.) AT NEW SITE DE LEON WAS NOMINATED PARTY PRESIDENTIAL PRE- CANDIDATE BY REPORTED UNANIMOUS VOTE OF 213 DELEGATES AND NEW PARTY DIRECTORATE WHICH PERSONALLY LOYAL TO HIM AND WHICH INCLUDED DANILO BARILLAS (SECRETARY GENERAL) AND VINICIO CEREZO AREVALO (ORGANIZATION SECRETARY) WAS ELECTED. DE LEON PROMISED CONVENTION THAT HE WOULD LOOK FOR AND OBTAIN UNITY OF LEFT, OFFERING POSSIBILITY OF TALKS WITH COLOM HOWEVER, DE LEON CAST DOUBT ON HIS WILLINGNESS TO FORM GENUINE UNITED FRONT WHEN HE ALSO STATED THAT HE WOULD NOT DEAL WITH DCG DISSIDENTS WHOM HE ACCUSED OF ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY PARTY.

3. FOR HIS PART, COLOM ARRIVED AT INDUSTRIAL PARK AFTER 9 A. M. AND OVERSAW RUMP SESSION WHICH NOMINATED HIM DCG STANDARD BEARER BY REPORTED UNANIMOUS VOTE OF 169 DELEGATES AND WHICH CHARGED DE LEON GROUP WITH NUMEROUS ANOMALIES INCLUDING USE OF BULLY BOYS TO HARASS PRO- COLOM DELEGATES AND UNANNOUNCED CHANGE OF CONVENTION SITE. AT SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE, COLOM DECLARED THAT ELECTORAL REGISTRY DECISION RECOGNIZING DE LEON VICTORY, IF FORTHCOMING, WOULD SHOW THAT DE LEON WAS IN BED WITH RIGHT WING MLN. (MLN SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED STATEMENT ASSERTING THAT COLOM LOST BECAUSE HE WAS IN BED (EN CONTUBERNIO) WITH GUERILLAS.)

COMMENT: EVENTS SURROUNDING CONVENTION STILL CLOUDED, BUT
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IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT COLOM, UNLIKE DE LEON, EMERGED LOOKING GOOD, EVEN THOUGH HE LOST. THE MAYOR OUTMANEUVERED DE LEON AT INDUSTRIAL PARK, SHOWED CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH WITHIN DCG, PARTICULARLY AMONG PARTY'S GRASS ROOTS, AND DEMONSTRATED WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ON DE LEON ON LATTER'S OWN TURF. DE LEON, FOR HIS PART, REFUSED COLOM'S REQUEST FOR

OPEN CONVENTION (I. E., SECRET BALLOT TO PROTECT DELEGATES FROM RECRIMINATION AND HAVING PRESIDENTS OF EACH MUNICIPALITY WARD SERVE AS THEIR DISTRICT' S CONVENTION REPRESENTATIVE), RIGGED CONVENTION IN HIS FAVOR THROUGH DEPARTMENT WARD CHIEFS WHO LONG IN HIS POCKET, SHUT COLOM OUT OF CONVENTION, AND, AS EXPECTED, WON NOMINATION. DE LEON' S PERFORMANCE, HOWEVER, WIDELY VIEWED AS THAT OF MAN WHO WAS AFRAID OF CONFRONTATION WITH COLOM AND WHO WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE DCG' S NOMINATION AT ANY COST. ALTHOUGH DE LEON HAS NOW APPARENTLY WON DCG NOMINATION, HIS VICTORY WAS PYRRHIC. IT IS WIDELY (AND CORRECTLY) BELIEVED IN POLITICALLY ASTUTE CIRCLES THAT DCG LEADER HAS RECEIVED GOG ASSISTANCE AND THAT ELECTORAL REGISTRY WILL RECOGNIZE HIS NOMINATION AS PART OF GOVERNMENT POLICY TO SPLIT LEFT AND OBSTRUCT COLOM' S PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS.

4. DESPITE POINTS EARNED ON MAY 20, COLOM HAS LITTLE LONG- TERM PROSPECTS TO OBTAIN A PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION OR INSCRIPTION OF HIS OWN FURD GROUP AND, IN LONG RUN, MAY BE FORCED TO EITHER DEAL WITH DE LEON OR BOYCOTT ELECTIONS. IN ANY EVENT, MAY 20 CONVENTION SIMILAR TO APRIL 14 REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PR) CONVENTION IN THAT LEADER OF EACH PARTY ARRANGED HIS OWN NOMINATION AT RIGGED CONVENTION WITH SECRET GOVERNMENT HELP, BUT THE MANEUVER, IN FACT, HAS SERIOUSLY COMPROMISED THEIR INTEGRITY. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, GOVERNMENT, RATHER THAN EITHER DE LEON OR COLOM, CAME CLOSEST TO ACHIEVING ITS FULL OBJECTIVES AT THE CONVENTION.
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